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DEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE FOR TORRICELLI, CLIFT AND EISELE

EP 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: AR, US, OVIP

SUBJ: PROPOSED VIDELA-MONDALE MEETING IN ROME

1. FOR PAST SEVERAL DAYS ITALIAN PRESS HAS BEEN FILLED WITH STORIES PROTESTING IMMINENT ARRIVAL HERE OF ARGENTINE PRESIDENT VIDELA TO HEAD HIS COUNTRY'S DELEGATION TO PAPAL INAUGURAL. ANGRY, BITTER ARTICLES OBJECT TO "DICTATOR" VIDELA'S MERE PRESENCE IN ITALY WHICH SOME PAPERS CHARACTERIZE AS "INSULT TO ALL CATHOLICS." POSSIBILITY OF ORGANIZED POLITICAL PROTESTS CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED.

2. WHILE EMBASSY WILL MAKE EVERY POSSIBLE EFFORT TO PREVENT DISCLOSURE TO PRESS OF PROPOSED MEETING BETWEEN VICE PRESIDENT AND VIDELA, PRESENCE OF JOURNALISTS AT AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE (FOR VICE PRESIDENT'S DEPARTURE REMARKS) DURING TIME OF PROPOSED MEETING, AS WELL AS POSSIBILITY OF LEAKS FROM ARGENTINE DELEGATION, POSE THREAT TO CONFIDENTIALITY OF ENCOUNTER WHICH CERTAIN SEGMENTS OF ITALIAN PRESS WOULD SEEK TO USE TO DETRIMENT OUR INTERESTS HERE.

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3. IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, BELIEVE WE SHOULD PREPARE PRESS GUIDANCE FOR USE IN EVENT OF LEAKS. WE PROPOSE RESPONSE FOR USE ON "IF ASKED" BASIS ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:

QUOTE VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE MET BRIEFLY THIS MORNING WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA AT THE RESIDENCE OF THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN ROME. THE PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES WHICH HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF EARLIER CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. END QUOTE. PLEASE ADVISE.

4. PLEASE PROVIDE US ALSO WITH PRESS GUIDANCE TO HANDLE ANY INQUIRY PRIOR TO MEETING.

5. IN ADDITION, SINCE ARGENTINIANS WOULD LIKE TO USE PARALLEL LANGUAGE, PLEASE ADVISE WHETHER WE CAN SHARE PRESS GUIDANCE WITH THEM. GARDNER

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